

Adelaide, January 19, 1839

Honored and beloved brethren!

Since my last letter to you, a longer period of time has passed than perhaps was permissible and as I intended. Various incidents, but mainly the immaturity of my inquiries into the customs and religious beliefs of the natives, were the reason why I have waited until now. I hope this reason will excuse me with you, just as the new and fascinating news that I will share below will undoubtedly compensate you for any perceived shortcomings so far.

a.) In accordance with a plan proposed by Mr. Angas, namely to establish a settlement of natives on the banks of the Darling, where it flows into the Murray, I set off on Monday before Easter to the confluence of the Murray and Darling, partly to see if many natives were there, and partly to determine whether the general nature of the land would allow for a settlement. My only companion was Mr. Menge; I had engaged a native, but on the morning of our departure, he had absconded, mainly because he would have had to carry his own provisions, just like me and Mr. Menge. His presence would have contributed little to my main objective, as he had never been to the Murray before and therefore did not know the way, and because the eastern tribes are hostile to the western ones; but he could have been of great service to us with his knowledge of water depths, which all natives possess, as the season was very dry and we often suffered from a lack of fresh water. For three or four days, we headed north to search for the Para River and a series of water ponds, which, according to Menge's opinion, would lead us to the Darling; but as we found neither of them, we finally turned northeast on the fifth day and soon came upon the vast plains through which the Murray flows. All my hopes were rekindled as we stood on the western mountains and surveyed the vast expanse through which that beautiful river flows, but they were bitterly disappointed as we approached and observed the great infertility and complete lack of water that prevailed in this plain, and as we had to go without a drop of fresh water for 24 hours, after having already been without it for 12 hours, apart from a little resin or rubber soup that Mr. Menge carried in his flask.

Finally, on the Saturday before Easter, as we walked wearily and powerlessly over barren weathered limestone and I thought of nothing less than fresh water, Mr. Menge said to me: "Do you see the river?" And as I raised my eyes, the actual Murray River glided past my feet, hidden in an enormously deep bed. Actually, the Murray has two beds, a wider, straighter one with enormously high banks, which perhaps dates back to the Flood or the Creation, and a narrower one, winding back and forth in the former, which the river later formed, with low sandy banks, lined with a dense row of beautiful trees, so that the river resembles a wide regular avenue. Due to the river's

meandering in that wide bed, considerable patches of the most fertile soil are cut off, which were completely dry at the time, but might be flooded during the rainy season. If these can be drained without much effort, they are the only place where a person could settle in that area of the Murray. On the lower bank, we found a small fire and suspected that natives must have been there. Exhausted and longing for refreshment, I wanted to wait until the next morning to visit them, but there was neither fire nor natives to be seen.

On the first Easter Sunday, we rested at Murray and discussed with us whether it was still possible to go to Darling or not; our greatly depleted food supplies decided in favor of the latter, and so I had to return without achieving my main objective, which, I believe, would not have been the case if Mr. Menge hadn't led us so far and for so long north on circuitous routes. However, even if we had reached the confluence of the two rivers, I wouldn't have gained much, as cattle drivers from New South Wales assured me that the banks of the Darling were, if possible, even more barren than those of the Murray. On the return journey, we followed the route that the cattle drivers from Sydney to Adelaide had taken, and arrived back in Adelaide on Easter Saturday. As for how far north we went along the Murray, I can't determine it, but Mr. Menge believes it was up to the knee, where the river turns south. The hardships of this journey were not insignificant, partly due to our initially heavy bundle, partly due to the heat, but mainly due to the drought, which forced us to often carry water with us. Apart from the already mentioned and another large fire of the natives, which we saw at a considerable distance on the return journey, we encountered many abandoned huts and settlements of them; from the complete lack of European traces, old rags, etc., I concluded that their inhabitants had never been to Adelaide.

Of course, that's why they are rare. However, the frequently encountered campsites and the well-worn footpaths on both sides of the Murray seem to prove to me that there are more of them than is commonly believed. Two ox drivers on horseback, who caught up with us on our return journey and had been following our tracks for two days, were surprised to hear that we had survived unscathed, as they assured us that they had been subjected to great harassment from the natives east of the Murray. Later expeditions are said to have encountered greater difficulties and reportedly used up all their supplies of gunpowder and lead. Everyone agrees that very handsome and strong people live to the east, and those who previously stayed in Adelaide have already noticed the same thing, while those coming from the north look very miserable.

Unfortunately, the previously good relationship between the indigenous people and Europeans was suddenly and horribly disrupted some time ago by two murders of two shepherds. Six natives were arrested as suspects, of whom three were later released without being convicted, one was sentenced to a year of imprisonment and hard labor, and two were hanged on May 31. One of the latter, named Barrabarti Farraitja, persistently denied his guilt, and the other natives also denied his complicity. Therefore, especially given the lack of knowledge of the language, the

interrogation must have been very inadequate, and it might have been wiser and better not to have sentenced them so quickly. The other, a very young man of about 18 or 19 years old, confessed before the interrogation in prison, where we visited them several times, that he had hit the white man on the shoulder with a small club, but another had hit him on the head and killed him. The impression that the execution of these two had on the other natives was not at all favorable to the Europeans; this could be inferred from their constant denials of guilt and the unusually long lamentations they addressed to the two, but their displeasure at the execution became even clearer when Farraitja's brother immediately went off to tell his relatives and tribe members what the foreigners had done. These then really came on June 18 to carry out the Nurutti, which the other natives so greatly feared and often mentioned, as a result of which all Europeans and themselves would die. (That they mean a kind of sorcery with the above words is certain, as it is in the water and hovers like smoke in the air, which is supposed to kill us without a club or spear, but how they actually imagine the Nurutti, I don't know.) However, Konuitja or Gudnaitja, one of the most intelligent and best men, went to meet them not far from the city and persuaded them not to perform their sorceries, saying that the foreigners were not evil, but would give them bread and so on. I saw them just coming into the city and immediately asked about their plans, but Gudnaitja told me with visible anxiety that I should not talk about it, because he was still not sure what they were planning and wanted to divert their attention as much as possible from their plans. The great power that the natives' superstition must attach to the Nurutti is evident from the fact that the sorcerer and at most a few 10 men were involved, while the other natives number at least 100, (not counting the masses, who were actually the target), and yet they are so afraid.

Among the Eastern customs that I mentioned in my earlier letters, it seems to me that the lamentations and funeral ceremonies of the natives are also included. When someone dies, the relatives and tribesmen take turns approaching him, crying bitter tears and shouting loudly in broken and indistinct tones: 'Ngaitjarli Ngaitjarli' (my father, my father!), 'Ngaitjo panjapi', 'Ngaitjo panjapi' (i.e. my brother, my brother!) and so on, depending on the kinship. On such occasions, one is involuntarily reminded of biblical stories, such as the lamentations of the children of Israel for Jacob, Jer. 22:18 and others, to which the customs of the natives provide a vivid illustration.

In many cases, a funeral of a deceased person is preceded by a kind of oracle, followed by a test that vividly reminds of the old German word "** die*". If the cause of death is not obvious, the natives believe that some villain has stabbed him in his sleep with a small smooth wooden dagger, which they use. At night, such a scoundrel sneaks into a person's camp, quietly lifts the blanket, and gently stabs his dagger from bottom to top into the body, so that the lungs are injured. When this happens, he closes the wound again, puts the blanket back and leaves, so that the person is not aware of it at all; but later, because the lungs are injured, he must die. Whenever this is suspected, the body is placed on a stretcher, carried around the places where the deceased had his camp, and asked if anyone and who stabbed him; the Kadliadli or

prophet, introduced by the next relative, gives information, as soon as the name of the murderer comes up, he quickly turns around and goes far away. The unfortunate person, on whom the superstition falls, has to withstand the throws of several spears, large spears, two Kajo, with which they shoot very accurately, and finally a blow to the head; if he deflects all the spears and also withstands the blow, his innocence is proven and he carries the glory of a good name away. Doesn't this custom remind anyone of the Middle Ages and the origin of the duel?

Even the burial of the natives is not without its fascinating aspects; as soon as a person dies, the body is wrapped in old rags or furs and grass, with the legs bent towards the stomach and the arms similarly placed against the chest, so that the body retains its natural length. Then, if necessary, the above-mentioned examination is carried out on the body and, after one or two days, depending on the weather and the condition of the corpse, the deceased is again placed on the stretcher, covered with green branches, and, accompanied by almost all the natives, carried to the burial site, which is distinguished only by those who were buried before him.

A man is now setting about making the grave by loosening the soil with a broad-tipped stick (Katta) and then throwing it out with a wooden shovel (Joxo). When the grave is almost finished, two men squat at its edge, looking intently and occasionally calling out in a muffled, eerie voice, chatting with each other or muttering to themselves. While this is going on, two men and two women move off in opposite directions, i.e. the men towards where the women have gone, and the women towards where the men have gone, so that each group describes a half-circle and together a complete circle. The men bring in each hand a piece of burnt black wood, which they hold close to their ears; the women, on the other hand, a bundle of hay (hence the former is called Ngarra-kupa, (ngarra means wood), the latter Tutánunjo, (tuta means grass or hay)), which they plant in the earth from the grave when they arrive and then, surrounding it, gaze into it for a while longer.

After this, they throw themselves around the corpse once more with loud howls and then lower it into the 4-5 foot deep grave; as soon as it touches the ground and the dry bark laid below breaks, everyone shakes their heads and makes a rumbling sound expressing disgust and repulsion. During both the burial and the preceding procedures, the gravedigger remains in the grave and only rises with the earth filling the grave, through which he struggles with difficulty, lying on his back. When the burial mound is formed, he remains sitting on it with the aforementioned two augurs, while the others move away a throw's distance, after which they throw the Katta and Joko with which the grave was made and towards which all hands stretch out to catch them. This last is a test of whether someone will die soon or not, but the significance of the other customs still needs to be explored. The burial site of the Adelaide indigenous people, by the way, is not far, about a quarter of an hour from the city.

As for the religious beliefs of the natives, I have already mentioned the evil Kuinjo, as well as the belief in a future life. However, it gives me great pleasure to be able to

add now that further experiences of the latter are increasingly reinforcing this belief, as the following individual stories demonstrate.

According to the beliefs of the indigenous people, the ancestors (Munana or Munaintjerlo) ascended to heaven, the abode of the future life, in a peculiar way. They threw spears (Kaja) towards all directions of the sky, but all of them fell back to earth. Finally, they threw one straight upwards, which remained standing at the top. They then threw a second one, which fitted into the soft end of the first one and also stayed put. They continued in this manner, until the pillar reached the earth and the people could ascend to heaven, where they now sit and enjoy an abundance of kangaroos and other food.

The Munaintjero are also said to have created heaven and earth or the world; at first, I believed that by taking that name in its entirety, I had already discovered the almighty Creator of the world and mistakenly wrote to Angas, but the joy has once again vanished. In the natives' concepts of supernatural things, the stars play a major role; some constellations of the southern celestial sphere have peculiar names and seem to be the dwelling places of the departed, but the two largest celestial bodies, elevated to the status of individuals, are the main pillars of their god doctrine. Tindojerlitto or Tindojerlimajo (the Sun Father) has several wives who are quite good, but he also has some long sisters who are very evil; these are probably personified planets and comets. He has power over the life and death of the black people, as the following story illustrates.

Kakirro (the Moon), who has no wives but a severe cough, told them that they should cough and spit into their hands, then offer the saliva as a sacrifice to the Sun. If Tindojerlitto accepts this offering, they are allowed to live longer; if not, he says, "Go away and die", and the black people die. Incidentally, they believe that there are a large number of Suns, whether this refers to multiple celestial bodies, or, more likely, whether they believe that we get a new Sun every day, I can't say; but the Moon, struck by Munana, dies when it's a new moon, yet there is only one Moon.

Among the more superstitious and ghostly beliefs is the great Jura beast, which lives in the water, and whose arrival is announced by the black stripe that can be seen in the sky during bright weather in the evening. Since the Jura is very evil and devours people, they need a lot of magic spells, some of which I possess, but I don't understand them. They handle such matters very secretly, as they are only communicated to those who are initiated through tattooing, and the women and children are not allowed to know anything about it. When this was told to me, it was under the express condition that I would not tell it to any other black (white?) man. One way I could obtain their secrets is to get tattooed, which they have often urged me to do, because, since I speak their language and am their man, I must also be created like them.

The above sufficiently proves that the indigenous people of New Holland are not those animalistically stupid people similar to the orangutans, as some travelers have depicted them, who were either prejudiced or ignorant and unable to judge them. Rather, the busy, never-resting spirit also reveals the image of God in them. That they led a constant nomadic life with all its hardships and roughness was very natural and necessary, as the nature of the land does not produce domestic animals, sand grains, or any significant vegetable species. --

However much I feel compelled to speak up for the natives when they are wronged, I cannot hide from you the atrocities that sin has wrought among them. I have already written about polygamy before, but there is also a form of polyandry, in which a brother allows or lends his wife to another, or however one might describe this disgusting practice; prostitution and the abuse of children, along with other pagan atrocities, are common among them. Of course, they have reaped and are still reaping the rewards of their errors; many have died from the dysentery that has ravaged the region, some are suffering from a repugnant disease, many are still afflicted, and few have recovered or are not even recovering at all. In this case, the disease was introduced by Europeans, but they knew about it before they had seen Europeans, have their own names for it, and are well aware of its contagiousness. They share another vice with the Spartans, namely that they do not raise or fetch deformed or misshapen children, as they otherwise put it, but leave them to their fate, whether they are male or female.

Among them, the missionary finds enough sin and difficulties that hinder his effectiveness. If, on top of that, there are those of another people, such as drinking, swearing, and the like, one might worry about the blessed success of all teaching and work. Nevertheless, it surprises me that the natives haven't sunk even lower, due to their constant interaction with a class of people like the English mob, who are crude and godless beyond all comprehension. Therefore, the plan to bring the natives into frequent contact with Europeans, and even to let them disperse among them, as envisaged by the governor and the previous protector of the natives, is highly detrimental to the latter, at least for the first few decades.

But even assuming that the governor wishes for the natives to settle in a separate place, he still has no power to allocate land to them. This restriction seems to me all the more unfair, as the natives are family-wise owners of certain stretches of land, which each family father has inherited from his father. If you ask them who their land belongs to now, they say they have given it to the whites. I recently wrote these facts to Mr. Angas, hoping that he, as a member of the Society for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples, will make use of them.

Some friends of the natives believe that we should teach them English, and have allowed us to pursue a different plan; but I hope that we will gain the approval of society all the more, as the natives speak very little and very poor English, and as the nature of the human soul, as the information elicited from them in their own language

shows, one can only approach human hearts in a language they are familiar with. I think the abuses of the Latin language before the Reformation are enough to eliminate all disagreements on this subject. Of course, it takes time, effort, and patience to learn the native language, but their wealth, and especially their resourcefulness, promise us ample compensation in the future. The proximity of the city, while it has all beneficial influences, also makes learning the language difficult, as it lures the natives into it and diverts their attention from us; and on our part, it prohibits us from becoming as familiar with them as we would like. Of course, we could have them in our houses in large numbers, but then they would also want to eat and drink, or they would go elsewhere. I tried again to take a boy into my house, but he lasted no more than two days, even though I allowed him to spend most of the day with his playmates. But even if he had stayed, I would have been forced to dismiss him due to a lack of resources.

This last circumstance, (believe me, dear brethren!, that I don't like to talk about it), is very oppressive and restrictive; I did indeed write in my last letter that Christian friends had offered to contribute another £100 to the Angas' £100 for the first year, but only £20 have actually reached us, whatever the reason might be; it wouldn't surprise me if those noble friends were forced to only partially fulfill their promises, as prices are so high and the money is in the hands of a few usurers. I couldn't believe until now that Mr. Angas could share in our predicament, but the fact that Mr. Pastor Wermelskirch's letter has been in our hands for so long, the opportunity to leave England so frequently, and yet no trace of the fifty pounds can be found, is likely to shake my faith soon. As a result of this limitation, we have been forced to manage our household ourselves so far; otherwise, I would have hired a German boy.

However, I don't want to sing a song of ingratitude here. Rather, I thank the Lord for his faithfulness and mercy, after which he has so far provided me with daily bread. But I regret the loss of time and the inactivity in which we are partly involved. I should have long since made a journey to Wirramu or Encounter Bay in the company of one or more natives, where a strong population lives, but the female part of it is now exposed to the animal lusts and shameful diseases of the whalers there, without protection or rights. That area is all the more recommended for our visits or the settlement of one of us, as it is the key to the entire east; but the aforementioned reason closes it off for us for now. Nevertheless, I intend to visit the natives of that area as soon as I can.

If you, dear brethren!, do not find a report of my effectiveness, or at least of my efforts, in the above, then, I must admit, I cannot provide you with such a report. I deliberately did not maintain the form of a diary, because things that naturally belong together are scattered in it, and because that form also seems boring to me. However, if you want a picture of my daily life, I can give it to you in a few strokes.

In the morning, my first task is to prepare breakfast. After doing some chores around the house, I head over to the natives' camp, where they're just starting to head into town one by one. If I find someone I can send and who's willing to go, they'll fetch me a pound of meat for lunch, which we cook and eat together. If I don't find anyone suitable, I have to go myself. In the afternoon, I either take a walk or, lately especially, I instruct a native to dig up and prepare soil for his house. I read a bit or do similar things, buy some things in the evening, and so on. The evenings (except for the rare occasions when I go out) are either spent by the natives' fire or, more often, I have one over at my place, where we cook and drink tea and chat. Now the nights are noticeably cold, and it rains quite heavily sometimes. This is just the usual routine, not to mention the many little things that nevertheless take up time.

I must still mention, as my special proof of God's help, that the governor has had each of us build a house, worth £48 each, on the site of the parkland between North and South Adelaide, where the natives most frequently set up their camp. The spot is on the north side of the Torrens in a triangle extending into the river, which may encompass about two to three English acres. However, my and Brother Teichelmann's houses are located at an angle, his at the eastern end, mine at the western, and the teacher's old house is at the apex. From the latter house, a row of houses for natives will run in a straight line towards mine, and in a curved line towards Teichelmann's, as required by the shape of the riverbank. Three houses are already built in the last row, to which the natives have contributed, and two others have begun to be built next to me. However, the gardens located in the riverbed are to be fenced off separately, and a fence will also be erected around the whole area. The natives' name for the described piece of land is: Pitlawodly * "Great House", which the previous protector, Mr. Wyatt, has retained, and whether the new one will do so remains to be seen. A few days ago, Brother Teichelmann and I went to thank the governor for our houses, during which he expressed how much the future well-being or misfortune of the South Australian natives depended on us; he, for his part, wanted to do what he could and should, etc. At the same time, he asked us to send a report and our views on the natives at the end of the half-year.

There might be many important or interesting things to mention, but the present is at least the most pressing. Perhaps you won't welcome the old newspapers I'm enclosing at this affordable opportunity, as our essays in them can help you gain a deeper insight into the state of South Australian society.

The journey these letters have taken to reach your hands is long, and therefore, hopefully, they will contribute to bringing hearts closer together and fostering mutual love and trust. With this wish, warm greetings, and a request for your intercession, I remain, beloved brethren!

Your most devoted

C. W. Schürmann.

To the committee
of the venerable ones.

Evangelical Lutheran Missionary Society
in Dresden